

Army Engineers' Give Report on Valley Flood Control Project

By William L. Finley, Sc. D. *Independence, Ore., Enterprise* Apr. 26, 1940

When army engineers were allotted \$300,000 to study and report the situation along the Willamette river in Oregon, it was in accordance with the flood control act of 1936, wherein if the federal government appropriated funds to carry out a project the state or local interests should also contribute a proportion of the expense.

Colonel Thomas M. Robins, division engineer, in his report, document No. 544, published by the house of representatives, stated that complete protection of the area subject to overflow was not warranted and could not be provided for. However, partial protection of important areas could be obtained either by a system of levees or bank protection works along the Willamette river, or by a series of dams and reservoirs at the headwaters. He also said that if the cost of dams and reservoirs had to be carried by flood control, it would be more economical for this partial protection of land to be handled by the building of levees. Next, he brought up the question of building of dams and reservoirs that could be used for other purposes and not solely for flood control.

The question proposed was a matter of costs and results, for flood control only by a levee system \$33,000,000; for flood control by dams and reservoirs \$62,075,000.

The report of army engineers suggested that if dams and reservoirs were constructed to control floods on the Willamette, these structures could be used for other purposes such as the development of power, irrigation, etc. On the other hand, Major General J. L. Schley, chief of engineers of the war department, and Brigadier General M. C. Tyler, senior member of the corps of engineers for rivers and harbors, stated that according to the 1936 flood control act if the government pays for construction, that "local interests be required to bear the costs of lands and damages as provided in that act, including costs of railroad relocations and facilities for the propagation of fish and related works, and be required to maintain and operate the reservoirs on completion."

In the two reports of the engineers mentioned above, it is stated in five different paragraphs that according to the estimated cost of \$62,075,000 for this Willamette valley project, the government is to pay \$43,430,000 and local interests are to pay \$18,645,000.

The national resources committee appointed by President Roosevelt, of which Harold L. Ickes, secretary of the interior, is chairman, had experts make a study of flood control and other problems. This committee stated: "If projects deserve federal contributions, they certainly also deserve local contributions, and unless local interests are prepared to make appropriate contributions on their own behalf, the federal government normally should not participate in the improvements they seek. The fact that a state or city wishes to save its own money cannot properly increase any federal obligations to help it. The fact that a state or city claims to be unable to contribute anything toward a waterway project it seeks, might well lead to postponement of the undertaking until its economic status has improved."

What have local promoters of the Willamette valley project done in high-jacking the government to foot the whole bill? Anticipating this very eventually, the national resources committee took the stand that we should not "permit pressure groups and special local interests to obtain unfair advantage at the expense of federal taxpayers."

Years ago one of the main boosters of the Willamette valley project said: "The president should balance the budget. But since he is a New Dealer and is going to keep spending, we must grab all we can for our own state." This is the mania that has spread all over the country. Political pressure in the states rules congressmen, and no federal officials or experts can prevent congress from skinning federal taxpayers.

The next stop of the manipulators was to get the flood control act of 1936 revamped into another flood control act of 1938. Relating to the Willamette valley project, this relieved local interests from helping to finance flood control for their own benefit. The government is now to pay all costs. Should taxpayers try to balance the budget, or should the pressure groups in all parts of the country be permitted to lift millions of dollars from the taxpayers' pockets and run the nation more in the red?

Finley Scores High Dams, Pollution and Salmon Hatcheries

Taking the broad ground that health and happiness that comes from recreation should come above making the "almighty dollar," William L. Finley, as guest speaker before the Kiwanis club Thursday noon scored pollution, high dams in the upper Willamette and praised the local people who brought about the possible restoration of fish life in the Clackamas river.

Finley said that a long experience in advocating the value of natural resources, timber, rivers and streams he had found that most people are primarily interested in the dollar, so much so that they permit the fouling of their rivers and sanction the building of dams that destroy fish life. Hitting hard at the fish hatchery fetish Finley held that his experience has proven that chinook salmon do not thrive when artificially hatched, and was glad that there is in the Oregon City community those who realize such is the fact.

Scoring Portland for its persistent failure to clean up its pollution, he insisted that this work is more important than making a great boulevard along front street, which will take people to the very shores of a fine stream that "stinks to heaven." Citing the fate of salmon in the Sacramento river in California, where they once boasted that 20,000,000 eggs were taken annually, he insisted that the Willamette is bound for the same fate unless the people awake and demand protection for fish life. They put dam after dam in the river and destroyed the runs. He insisted that the same fate came to Baker river in Washington and the Salmon river in Idaho.

Saying that he was glad to note that enough interest has been taken to compel the construction of fishway ladders on the Clackamas river, and reiterated that the way to build up a chinook run is to permit natural propagation. In answer to a question the speaker stated that there should be serious study of the matter before the private utility companies are put out of business. If the government takes over this service, he said, the banks will be next, with other industries to follow.

President Phil Hammond presided and introduced the speaker.

Audubon Dinner Brings Out 300

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More than 250 persons attended a banquet of the Oregon Audubon society Thursday night in the Portland Rose tearoom.

The affair was sponsored by the Lucy club—an auxiliary to the society.

W. H. Crowell presided and E. F. Averill spoke on the life of Audubon. William L. Finley, naturalist, lectured briefly and exhibited motion pictures.